MARJORIE LIU
SANA TAKEDA
MONSTRESS
image
ISSUE 23
WINNER OF FIVE 2018 EISNER AWARDS

MONSTRESS™ ISSUE 23

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THE MONSTRESS STORY SO FAR...

During her search for her kidnapped companion, Kippa, Maika Halfwolf was abducted by members of the Blood Court, a secretive organization that worships the Shaman-Empress's bloodline. These cultists/warriors are led by the Lord Doctor, the last eye-marked descendant of the Shaman-Empress – and Maika's biological father. The Blood Court is prepared to enter the fray and ascend to power when the Known World slips back into open warfare, and they are allied with some of the greatest War-Masters of this or any age. But Maika does not trust this father she never knew, not least because he surgically attached a prosthetic arm to her body without her consent.

Maika's father tried to convince her to join his cause, inviting her to a high-level strategy meeting with the War-Masters and offering her advice, power, and information about her earliest years, when her parents lived together and the always-enigmatic Master Ren served as her nursemaid. But Maika held her ground and was prepared to leave her father's compound when she made a shocking discovery: the Lord Doctor has taken possession of the Inquisitrix Gull, and is using her Monstrum-controlled body to perform gruesome experiments.

THE PLAYERS...

MAIKA An Arcanic teen who survived the Great War, and slavery at the hands of the Cumaean witch nuns. Ruthless and haunted, she is determined to uncover the truth behind her mother's murder — and her mother's secrets — in the hope that she can free herself from an ancient and dangerous god called a Monstrum that is imprisoned inside her body and fills her with an otherworldly hunger for human flesh.

ZINN A mysterious, primordial Monstrum of tremendous power that shares Maika's body and mind, and fights her for control. Once considered a god, and drawn into this world by the Shaman-Empress, this Monstrum is driven by a deadly hunger, consuming the lives of humans and Arcanics alike, leaving only their desiccated corpses behind. Though it may give the impression that its only wish is to survive, there's far more to this creature, and its desires, than meets the eye…

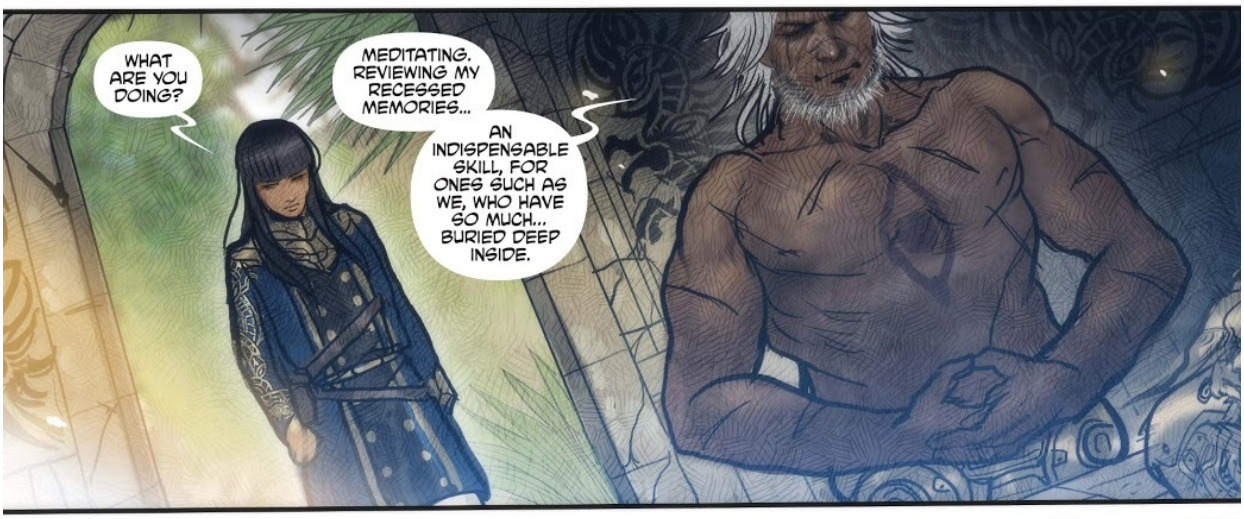
KIPPA An Arcanic fox girl saved from slavery by Maika. Innocent and optimistic, she is frightened by the Monstrum — but trusts Maika and will bravely defend her and others by rushing into battles too dangerous for a child.

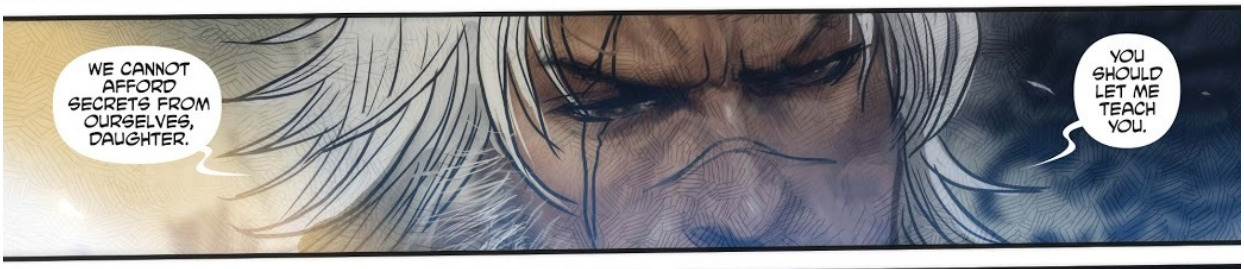
REN An enigmatic nekomancer cat with mysterious motives, he is one of Maika's companions on her journey, and perhaps an agent of the Dusk Court — or some greater power.

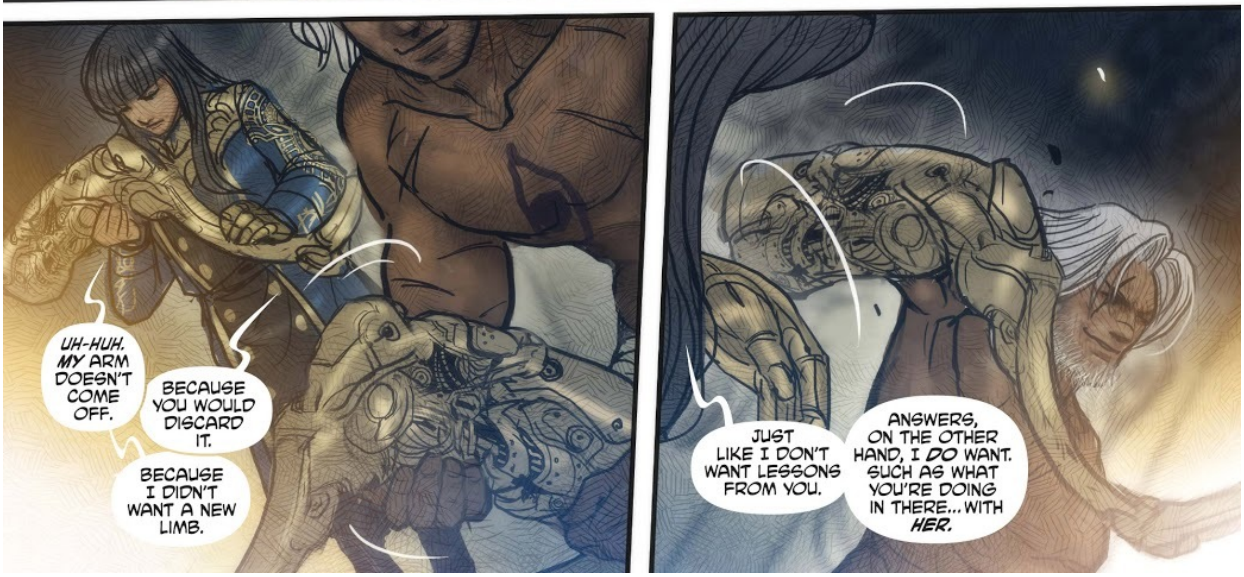
SHAMAN-EMPRESS The first and most powerful Arcanic who ever lived, a science-master of the highest order and Zinn's beloved. Maika is her direct descendant, and bears her Mark of the Eye.

YOU WON'T BE HURT! I PROMISE!
STOP RUNNING!
WHH-KRAK
GET AWAY FROM ME!
NNGH!
HOLD HER!
WHERE ARE THE FUCKING ROPES?
WHUDD
RHAAAHH!
SSLASHH
YEEARRGH!

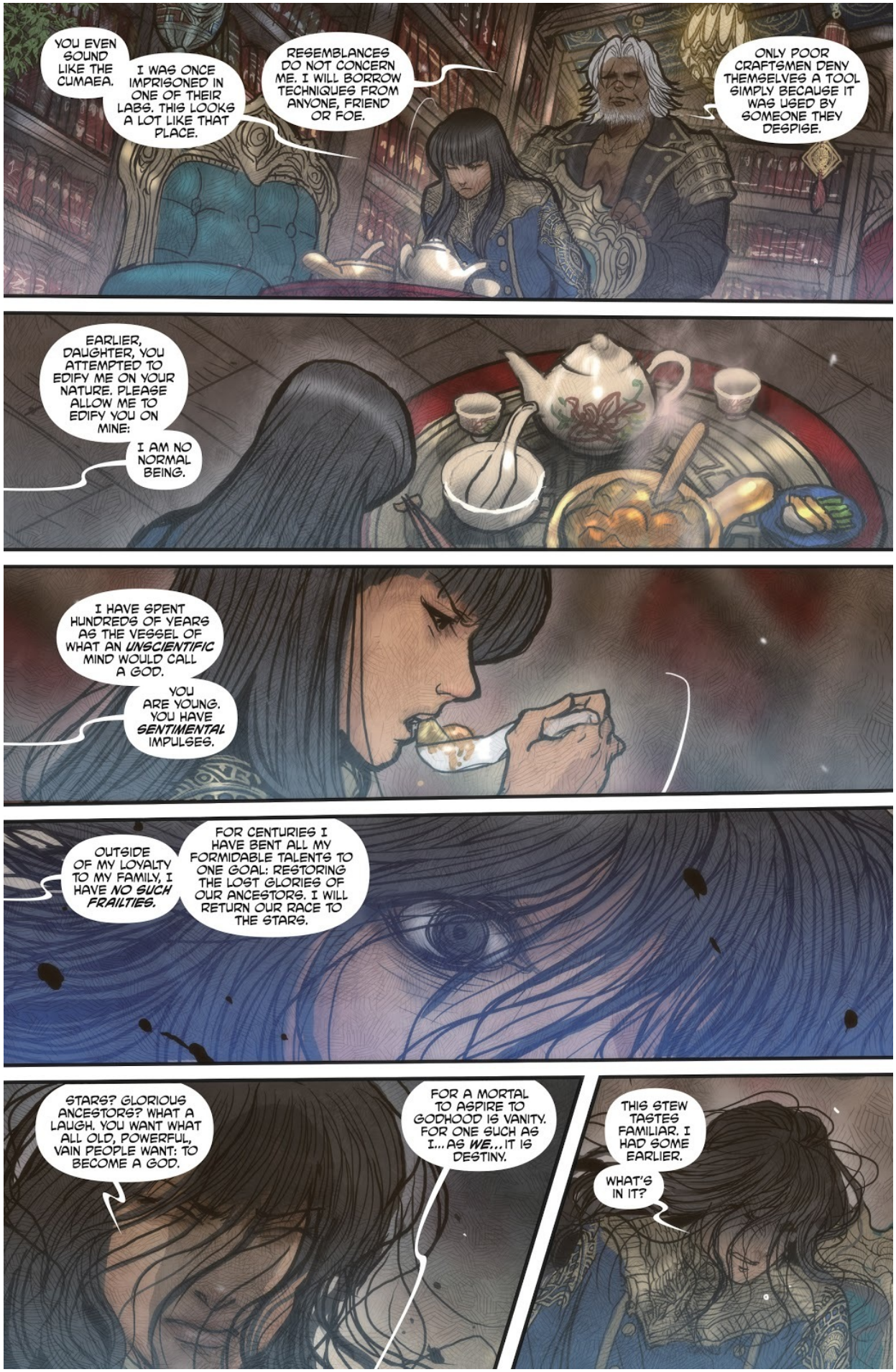
YAHH!!
WRAM!
SHHHHRP
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
UBASTI... I REALLY LET MYSELF... GO...
MASTER REN...


WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
MEDITATING. REVIEWING MY RECESSED MEMORIES...
AN INDISPENSABLE SKILL, FOR ONES SUCH AS WE, WHO HAVE SO MUCH... BURIED DEEP INSIDE.


WE CANNOT AFFORD SECRETS FROM OURSELVES, DAUGHTER.
YOU SHOULD LET ME TEACH YOU.


UH-HUH. *MY* ARM DOESN'T COME OFF.
BECAUSE YOU WOULD DISCARD IT.
BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT A NEW LIMB.
JUST LIKE I DON'T WANT LESSONS FROM YOU.
ANSWERS, ON THE OTHER HAND, I *DO* WANT. SUCH AS WHAT YOU'RE DOING IN THERE... WITH ***HER.***

I AM LEARNING, DAUGHTER.
I HAVE CONFIRMED THAT THESE CREATURES ARE CAPABLE OF A VAST TELEPATHIC REACH... ONE THAT I BELIEVE IS MORE EASILY FACILITATED THROUGH THE MASK.
YVETTE LO LIM, AND HER UNNATURAL CONNECTION TO THE FRAGMENT IN YOUR POSSESSION, IS A MOST USEFUL EXAMPLE OF THAT TELEPATHY.
FORTUNATELY, I SUSPECT THE SAME FIELD I DEPLOY TO SHIELD THE MASK FROM YVETTE AND OTHER SEEKERS ALSO ISOLATES THIS SUBJECT FROM THE REST OF HER KIND.
THOSE TUBES COMING OUT OF HER BODY... IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE DRAINING HER BLOOD.
AN EXPERIMENT.
HUMANS HAVE LONG HARVESTED ARCANIC BODIES FOR USEFUL PURPOSES -- WHY NOT SEEK TO DO THE SAME TO THE OLD GODS?
HUH.
THIS... TROUBLES YOU.
IMPRISONMENT? TORTURE? MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS ON PEOPLE? YEAH, CALL ME TROUBLED.
THIS THING IS NOT A PERSON, BY EVEN THE MOST GENEROUS DEFINITION OF THE TERM.
IT HAS NO REAL AGENCY, ONLY THE *ILLUSION* OF ONE TO BETTER FOOL ITS ADVERSARIES.
IT IS MORE OF A... MECHANISM. A CUNNING AND DANGEROUS MECHANISM... BUT ONE THAT CAN BE TAMED. YOU SHOULD WASTE NO COMPASSION ON IT.
THE CUMAEA DON'T THINK WE'RE PEOPLE EITHER, OLD MAN. THEY SAY WE DON'T HAVE SOULS.
WE CAN QUIBBLE ETHICS ALL DAY, DAUGHTER, BUT THERE CAN BE NO DENYING THAT WE ARE ON THE BRINK OF WAR.
A WAR THAT WILL BE DECIDED BY INTELLIGENCE. I DO NOT INTEND TO LOSE THAT WAR BECAUSE OF A FRAILTY OF CONSCIENCE.


YOU EVEN SOUND LIKE THE CUMAEA.
I WAS ONCE IMPRISONED IN ONE OF THEIR LABS. THIS LOOKS A LOT LIKE THAT PLACE.
RESEMBLANCES DO NOT CONCERN ME. I WILL BORROW TECHNIQUES FROM ANYONE, FRIEND OR FOE.
ONLY POOR CRAFTSMEN DENY THEMSELVES A TOOL SIMPLY BECAUSE IT WAS USED BY SOMEONE THEY DESPISE.
EARLIER, DAUGHTER, YOU ATTEMPTED TO EDIFY ME ON YOUR NATURE. PLEASE ALLOW ME TO EDIFY YOU ON MINE:
I AM NO NORMAL BEING.
I HAVE SPENT HUNDREDS OF YEARS AS THE VESSEL OF WHAT AN *UNSCIENTIFIC* MIND WOULD CALL A GOD.
YOU ARE YOUNG. YOU HAVE *SENTIMENTAL* IMPULSES.
OUTSIDE OF MY LOYALTY TO MY FAMILY, I HAVE *NO SUCH FRAILTIES.*
FOR CENTURIES I HAVE BENT ALL MY FORMIDABLE TALENTS TO ONE GOAL: RESTORING THE LOST GLORIES OF OUR ANCESTORS. I WILL RETURN OUR RACE TO THE STARS.
STARS? GLORIOUS ANCESTORS? WHAT A LAUGH. YOU WANT WHAT ALL OLD, POWERFUL, VAIN PEOPLE WANT: TO BECOME A GOD.
FOR A MORTAL TO ASPIRE TO GODHOOD IS VANITY. FOR ONE SUCH AS I... AS *WE*... IT IS DESTINY.
THIS STEW TASTES FAMILIAR. I HAD SOME EARLIER.
WHAT'S IN IT?

I THINK YOU ALREADY KNOW, DAUGHTER.

HURRAAUGH
A MAN AS OLD AS I AM HAS MANY NAMES -- A NAME FOR EACH OF MY FACES.
HERE, NOW, I AM THE LORD DOCTOR.
BUT IN THE POPULAR PRESSES OF OUR MORE ADVANCED CITIES, I HAVE ACQUIRED ANOTHER NAME. A NAME NO ONE WOULD EVER ASSOCIATE WITH THE GENTEEL FIGURE BEFORE YOU...
...THE GHOUL KILLER.
PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD OF HIM?
THE CANNIBAL MURDERER. THAT'S YOU.
AND YOU.
CHINNK
EVERY BLESSING HAS A PRICE, DAUGHTER.

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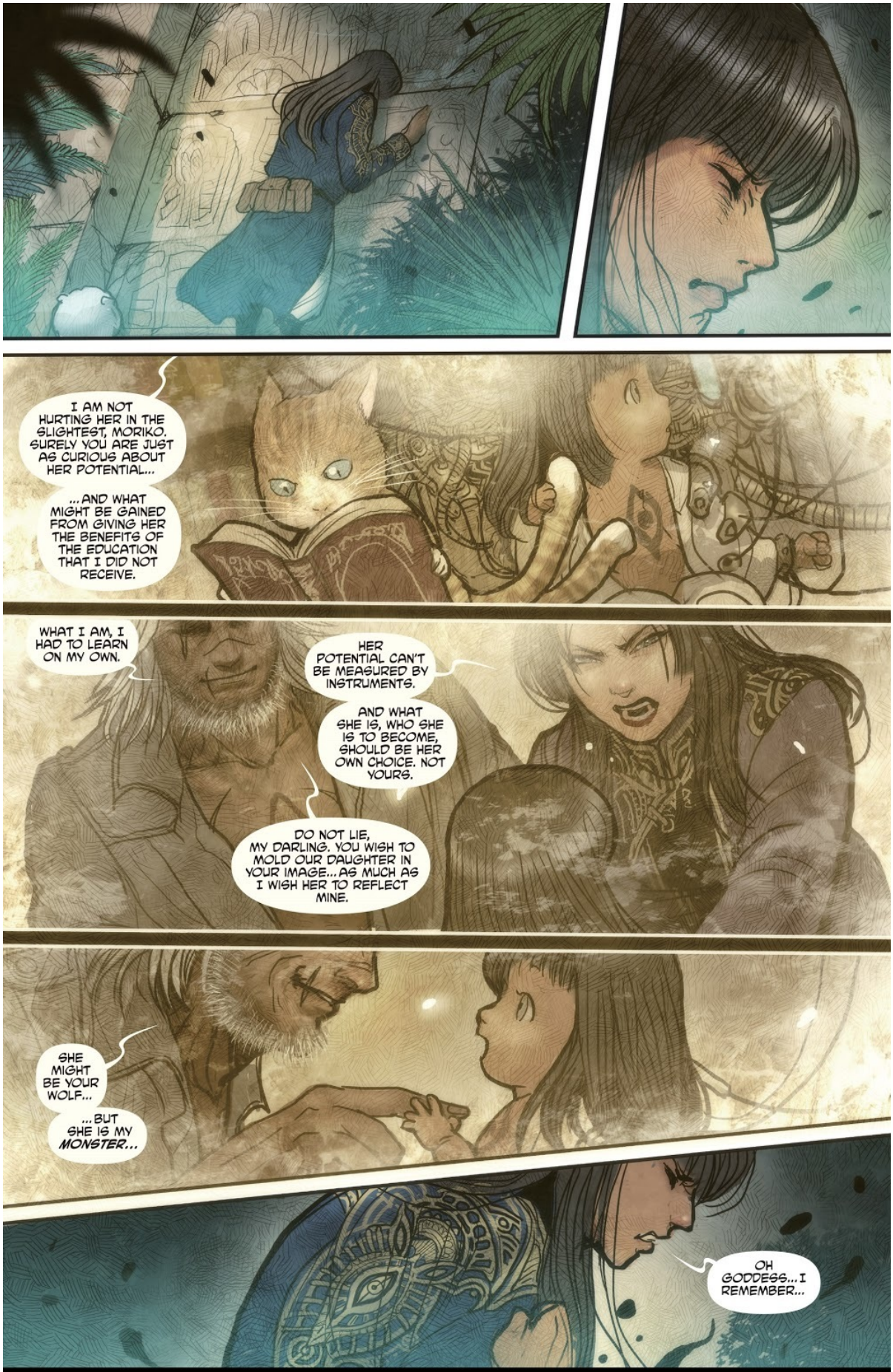
I AM NOT HURTING HER IN THE SLIGHTEST, MORIKO. SURELY YOU ARE JUST AS CURIOUS ABOUT HER POTENTIAL...
...AND WHAT MIGHT BE GAINED FROM GIVING HER THE BENEFITS OF THE EDUCATION THAT I DID NOT RECEIVE.
WHAT I AM, I HAD TO LEARN ON MY OWN.
HER POTENTIAL CAN'T BE MEASURED BY INSTRUMENTS.
AND WHAT SHE IS, WHO SHE IS TO BECOME, SHOULD BE HER OWN CHOICE. NOT YOURS.
DO NOT LIE, MY DARLING. YOU WISH TO MOLD OUR DAUGHTER IN YOUR IMAGE... AS MUCH AS I WISH HER TO REFLECT MINE.
SHE MIGHT BE YOUR WOLF...
...BUT SHE IS MY MONSTER...
OH GODDESS... I REMEMBER...

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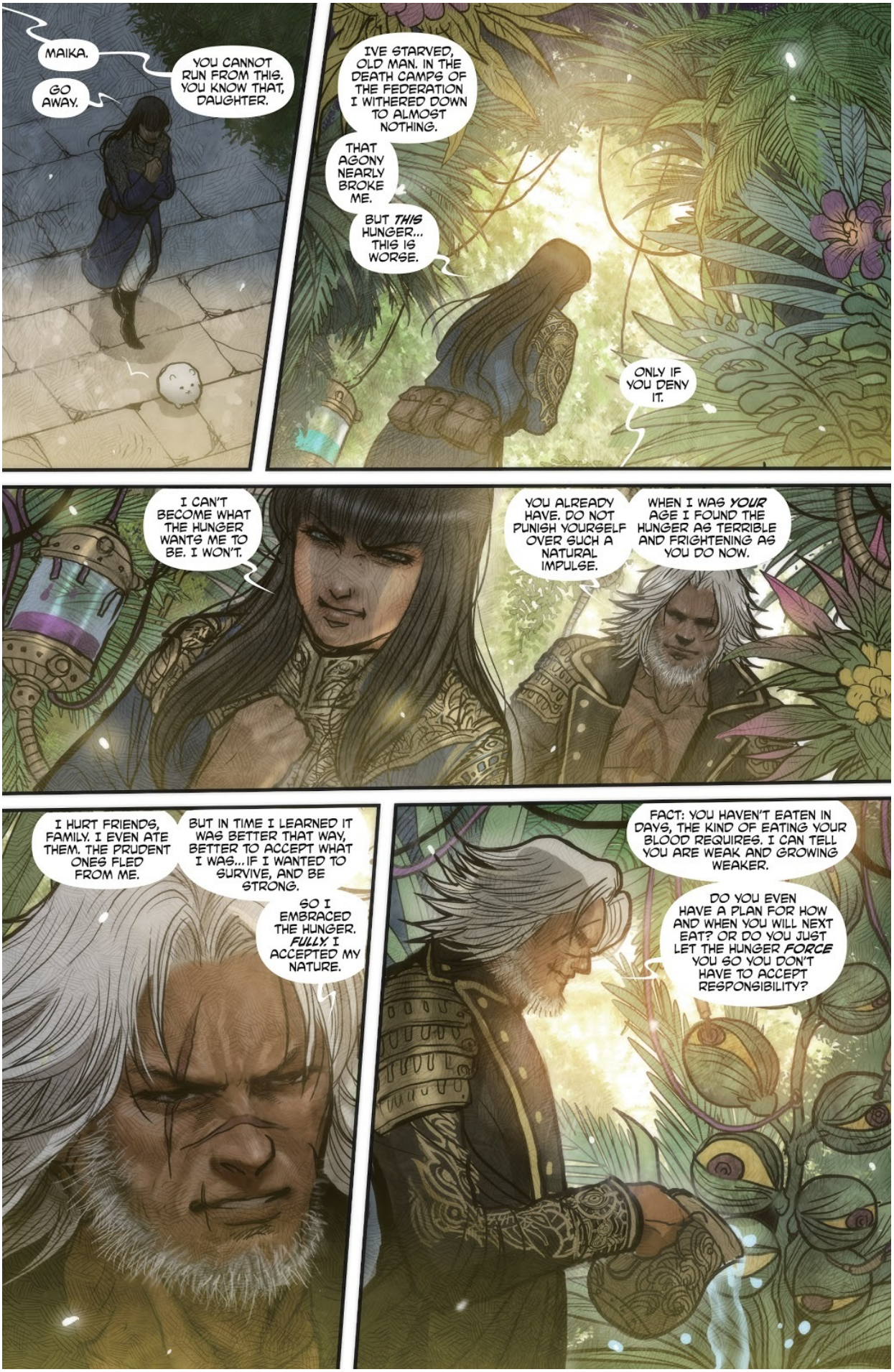
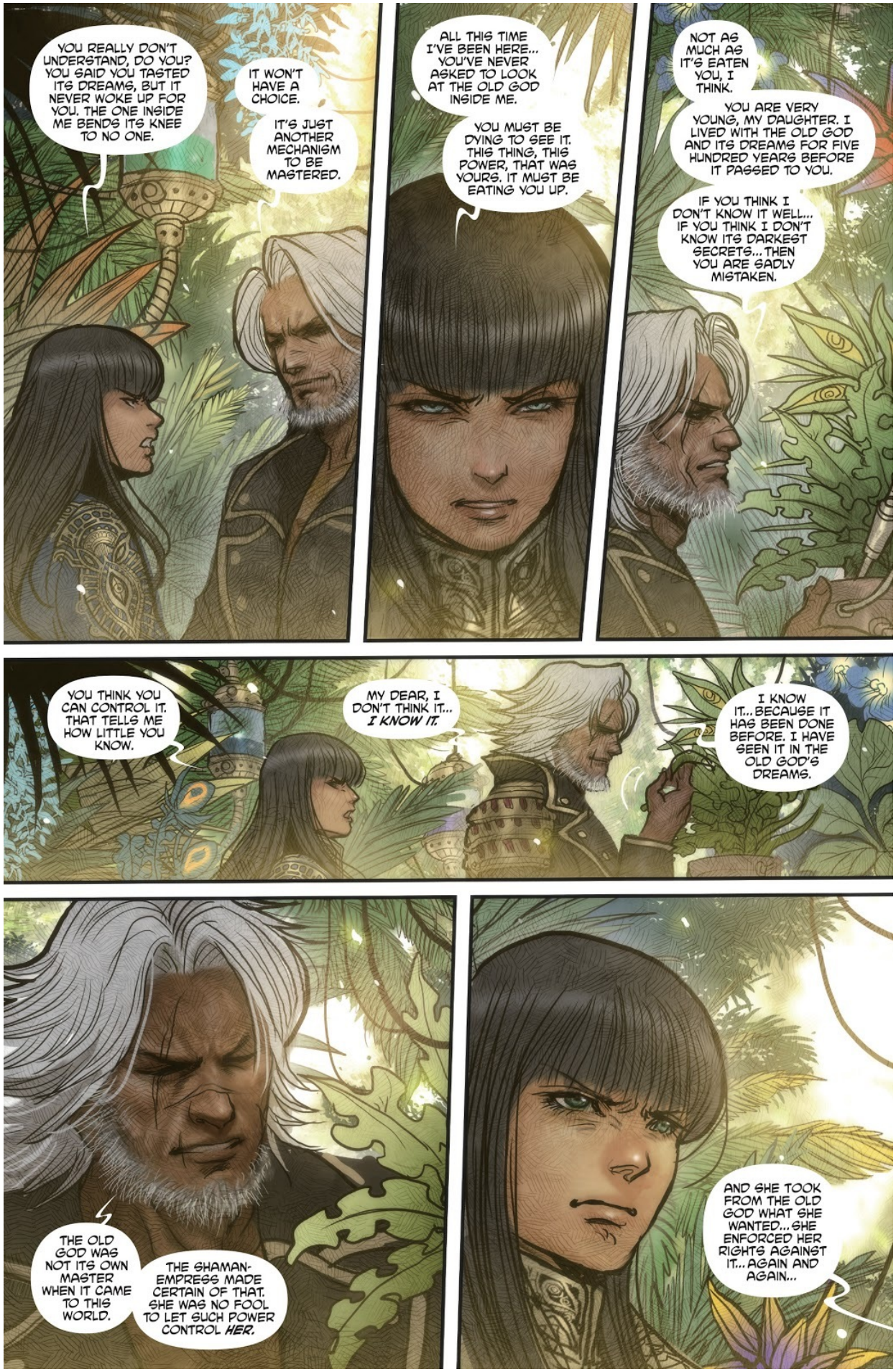

MAIKA.
GO AWAY.
YOU CANNOT RUN FROM THIS. YOU KNOW THAT, DAUGHTER.
IVE STARVED, OLD MAN. IN THE DEATH CAMPS OF THE FEDERATION I WITHERED DOWN TO ALMOST NOTHING.
THAT AGONY NEARLY BROKE ME.
BUT *THIS* HUNGER... THIS IS WORSE.
ONLY IF YOU DENY IT.
I CAN'T BECOME WHAT THE HUNGER WANTS ME TO BE. I WON'T.
YOU ALREADY HAVE. DO NOT PUNISH YOURSELF OVER SUCH A NATURAL IMPULSE.
WHEN I WAS *YOUR* AGE I FOUND THE HUNGER AS TERRIBLE AND FRIGHTENING AS YOU DO NOW.
I HURT FRIENDS, FAMILY. I EVEN ATE THEM. THE PRUDENT ONES FLED FROM ME.
BUT IN TIME I LEARNED IT WAS BETTER THAT WAY, BETTER TO ACCEPT WHAT I WAS... IF I WANTED TO SURVIVE, AND BE STRONG.
SO I EMBRACED THE HUNGER. *FULLY* I ACCEPTED MY NATURE.
FACT: YOU HAVEN'T EATEN IN DAYS, THE KIND OF EATING YOUR BLOOD REQUIRES. I CAN TELL YOU ARE WEAK AND GROWING WEAKER.
DO YOU EVEN HAVE A PLAN FOR HOW AND WHEN YOU WILL NEXT EAT? OR DO YOU JUST LET THE HUNGER *FORCE* YOU SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY?

THERE HAS TO BE ANOTHER WAY. EATING ANIMALS --
IT IS NOT THE SAME. I HAVE TRIED, AGAIN AND AGAIN.
ASK A WOLF TO SURVIVE ON RADISHES. ASK AN EAGLE TO THRIVE ON LEAVES. THEY ARE NOT MADE FOR IT. NOR ARE WE.
YOU KNOW IT IS THE TRUTH, DAUGHTER.
I SPEAK FROM EXPERIENCE -- THIS AVOIDANCE IS HOW YOU END UP EATING THE PEOPLE CLOSE TO YOU.
YOU MAY FIND MY HABITS UNSEEMINGLY, BUT AT LEAST I AM MINDFUL.
BUT WHAT IF I TOLD YOU...
...I COULD END YOUR HUNGER...
...THOUGH IT WOULD MEAN SEPARATING YOURSELF FROM THE OLD GOD... AND RETURNING IT TO ME...
OH, WHAT A SURPRISE.
A FATHER ONLY WANTS HIS DAUGHTER TO BE HAPPY.
SUCH FUCKING BULLSHIT.
THIS WAS YOUR PLAN ALL ALONG.
NOT AT ALL. I'VE OFFERED -- RELUCTANTLY, AT THAT. NOR WILL I FORCE YOU. THIS IS YOUR CHOICE.
AND I CONFESS... I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF IT WOULD WORK...
...BUT YOU WOULDN'T BE WORSE OFF IF IT DIDN'T.
LET'S SAY IT DOES...
YOU'RE IN FOR A WORLD OF DISAPPOINTMENT. THE OLD GOD IN ME WILL NEVER SHARE ITS STRENGTH WITH ANYONE.
IT SEEMS TO HAVE SHARED IT WITH YOU.
POWER SERVES THOSE WITH THE STRENGTH TO SEIZE IT.


YOU REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND, DO YOU? YOU SAID YOU TASTED ITS DREAMS, BUT IT NEVER WOKE UP FOR YOU. THE ONE INSIDE ME BENDS ITS KNEE TO NO ONE.
IT WON'T HAVE A CHOICE.
IT'S JUST ANOTHER MECHANISM TO BE MASTERED.
ALL THIS TIME I'VE BEEN HERE... YOU'VE NEVER ASKED TO LOOK AT THE OLD GOD INSIDE ME.
YOU MUST BE DYING TO SEE IT. THIS THING, THIS POWER, THAT WAS YOURS. IT MUST BE EATING YOU UP.
NOT AS MUCH AS IT'S EATEN YOU, I THINK.
YOU ARE VERY YOUNG, MY DAUGHTER. I LIVED WITH THE OLD GOD AND ITS DREAMS FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE IT PASSED TO YOU.
IF YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW IT WELL... IF YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW ITS DARKEST SECRETS... THEN YOU ARE SADLY MISTAKEN.
YOU THINK YOU CAN CONTROL IT. THAT TELLS ME HOW LITTLE YOU KNOW.
MY DEAR, I DON'T THINK IT... I KNOW IT.
I KNOW IT... BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE. I HAVE SEEN IT IN THE OLD GOD'S DREAMS.
THE OLD GOD WAS NOT ITS OWN MASTER WHEN IT CAME TO THIS WORLD.
THE SHAMAN-EMPRESS MADE CERTAIN OF THAT. SHE WAS NO FOOL TO LET SUCH POWER CONTROL HER.
AND SHE TOOK FROM THE OLD GOD WHAT SHE WANTED... SHE ENFORCED HER RIGHTS AGAINST IT... AGAIN AND AGAIN...

:ZZZ: LORD DOCTOR :ZZZ: YOU'RE NEEDED :ZZZ: THE WAVE COURT REPRESENTATIVE WILL SOON LEAVE...
AH.
THIS WON'T TAKE LONG, DAUGHTER. YOU SHOULD STAY HERE AND... REFLECT ON WHAT WE'VE DISCUSSED.
AM I JUST ANOTHER ANOMALY... ANOTHER MECHANISM TO BE MASTERED?
NO. UNLIKE THE CREATURE DOWN BELOW IN MY LAB, WHOSE PERSONHOOD HAS BEEN COMPLETELY ABSORBED... YOU ARE STILL THE MASTER.
AND THE OLD GOD IS YOUR SLAVE.

OH, GODDESS... WHAT AN *EXTRAORDINARY* LABORATORY.
I HAD HEARD RUMORS OF THIS DOCTOR, BUT CLEARLY THEY UNDERSTATED THE SCOPE OF HIS REACH AND POWER.
I AM *TRULY* IMPRESSED.
WHO ARE YOU?
I SOMETIMES ASK MYSELF THAT SAME QUESTION, AND I AM ALWAYS *DELIGHTED* WITH THE ANSWER.
VIHN? WHAT THE FUCK?
REN DISCLOSED SOME OF WHAT YOU'D FIND HERE, AND IN THE SPIRIT OF COMPLETE SELF-INTEREST, I CAME TO HELP.
YOU AND I HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS.
GET IN LINE. HAVE YOU SEEN KIPPA --
SHE'S SAFE, NOT FAR AWAY.
BUT IN A LAB THIS ADVANCED I SUSPECT THERE ARE SENSORS RECORDING OUR EVERY MOVE. IF WE WISH TO LEAVE, IT SHOULD BE AS SOON AS --
NO.
AH... SO YOU *DO* WISH TO STAY WITH YOUR FATHER.
REN THOUGHT THAT MIGHT BE A POSSIBILITY --
NO, AGAIN.

I HAVE SOMETHING ELSE I NEED TO DO.
FOLLOW ME.
ALAS, I HAVE NEVER BEEN MUCH OF A FOLLOWER --
:GASP:
HOW...
VIHN!
HURRY, HELP ME FREE HER.
WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THIS IS THE CREATURE WHO HELPED RELEASE THE OLD GODS.
CRRSH
NO SHIT. THE OLD MAN IS EXPERIMENTING ON HER.
I WOULD, TOO, IF I HAD THIS MARVELOUS MACHINE.
LOOK AT THIS... HE'S BEEN EXTRACTING BLOOD FROM HER... BUT THESE AREN'T NORMAL TANKS.
HE'S *PROCESSING* IT... AS A POWER SOURCE, PERHAPS? BUT HOW WOULD HE KNOW *THE METHOD*... WHEN THE SHAMAN-EMPRESS TOLD *NO ONE*...
VIHN, DAMN IT! HELP ME! WE DON'T HAVE TIME!

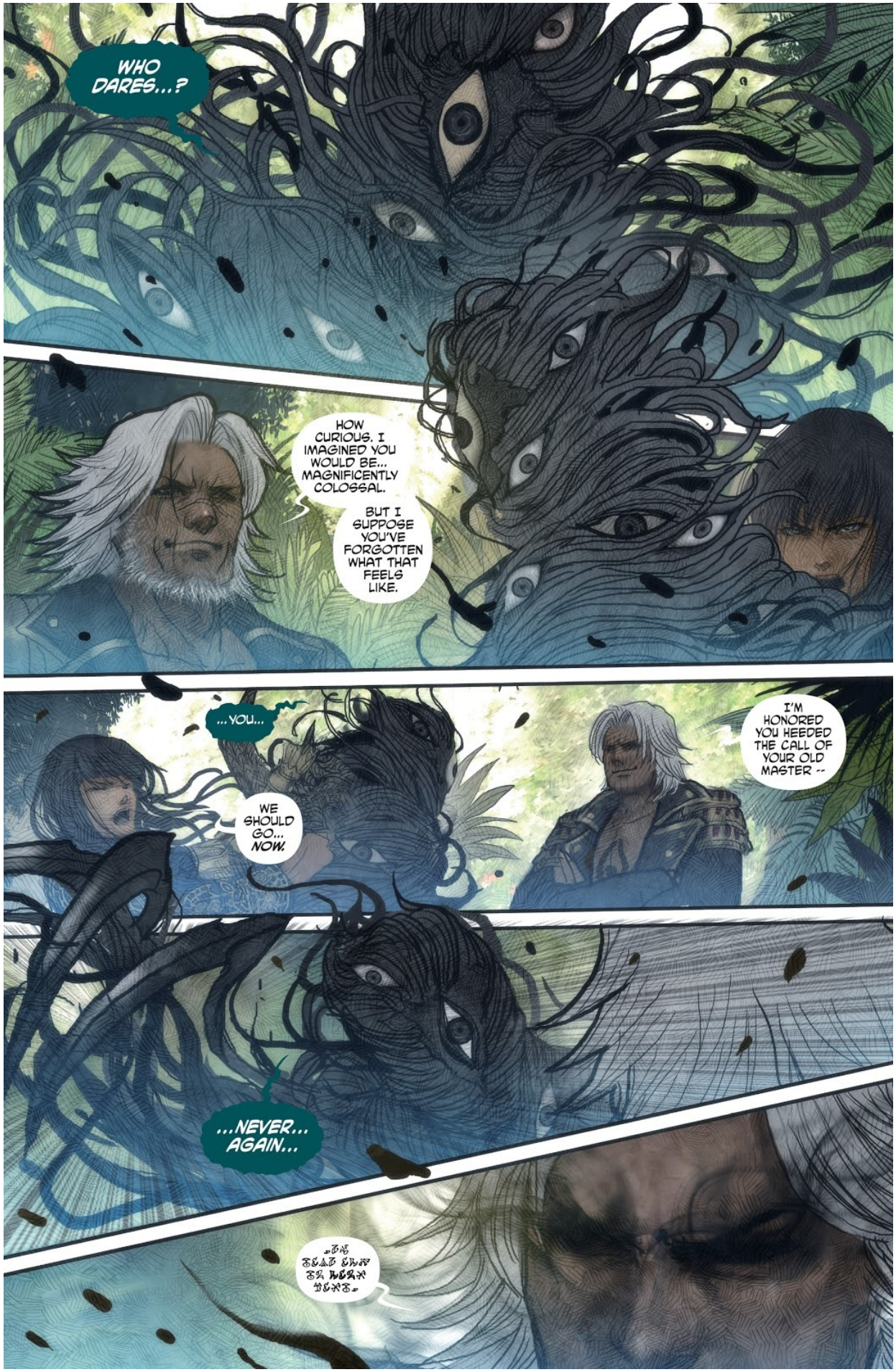
RRNNHH!
JUST.. KILL... ME...
...BEFORE HE COMES... BACK...
SHUT UP AND TRY TO STAND.
SPLSH
DAUGHTER.
PERHAPS AN EXPLANATION? AND AN... INTRODUCTION?
LORD DOCTOR.
IT'S A PLEASURE TO BE IN YOUR ILLUSTRIOUS PRESENCE. I AM VIHN, THE HIGH ENGINEER OF PONTUS, AND --
-- AND WE'VE MET BEFORE, THOUGH NEVER FORMALLY.
THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, GIVE OR TAKE A DECADE. AT THE OPENING OF THE GREAT LIBRARY IN DAMMARUNG.
YOU WERE WEARING A... DIFFERENT SKIN THAT NIGHT.
THOUGH YOUR TRUE RADIANCE IS UNCHANGING.

OH, FUCK ME.
I DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR THIS SHIT.
SUCH INTERESTING COMPANY YOU KEEP, DAUGHTER.
YOU SAID I'M FREE TO GO.
WITH WHAT YOU CAME WITH, YES. THOUGH IT GRIEVES ME TO PART WITH YOU SO SOON.
THERE'S SO MUCH FOR ME TO TELL YOU... EVEN IF YOU DON'T HEAR A WORD.
I HEAR *EVERYTHING* YOU SAY.
THEN UNDERSTAND, YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR ME. YOU ARE FAMISHED... WHILE I HAVE ONLY RECENTLY FED.
AND IF YOU FIGHT, YOU WILL HAVE TO FEED WHEN IT'S OVER... AND YOU KNOW HOW DISTASTEFUL YOU FIND *THAT.*
I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT YOU.
BUT I'M LEAVING WITH YOUR PRISONER... AND VIHN, WHOEVER THAT BITCH IS.

WHOOSH
WHOOSH
CHAK
POK
PLEASE, LET'S STOP THIS FOOLISHNESS BEFORE SOMEONE GETS HURT.
THMP
FLP
WHUDD
DEAR DAUGHTER... DID YOUR MOTHER TEACH YOU ANYTHING THAT DOESN'T INVOLVE VIOLENCE?

OF COURSE SHE DID.
BUT I LIKE HITTING THINGS.
HMMM...
YOU SAY YOU ARE MY FATHER.
I AM.
WELL, THEN... FATHER... I DEMAND A DAUGHTER'S PREROGATIVE. I WANT YOU TO GIVE ME YOUR PRISONER.
I SEE. AND YOU WILL BE DISAPPOINTED IF I DENY YOU?
DEEPLY.

YOU MAY TAKE THE CREATURE. IT WILL TRY TO KILL YOU, I PROMISE YOU THAT.
BUT PERHAPS THEN YOU WON'T FEEL REMORSE WHEN YOU ARE FORCED TO DEVOUR HER.
THANK YOU... FATHER.
DAUGHTER, I AM PLEASED BEYOND WORDS THAT YOU ACKNOWLEDGE OUR BOND.
BUT NOW I WISH TO CLAIM A FATHER'S PREROGATIVE.
SHOW ME THE OLD GOD.
HALFWOLF, I WOULD NOT ADVISE IT. THIS LABORATORY IS RECORDING --
MAYBE NEXT TIME, FATHER.
DEAREST DAUGHTER, I MUST INSIST.
WHAT THE--?
NO!


WHO DARES...?
HOW CURIOUS. I IMAGINED YOU WOULD BE... MAGNIFICENTLY COLOSSAL.
BUT I SUPPOSE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN WHAT THAT FEELS LIKE.
...YOU...
I'M HONORED YOU HEEDED THE CALL OF YOUR OLD MASTER --
WE SHOULD GO... NOW.
...NEVER... AGAIN...

RRAHH?!
...MY LIMBS...
...I UNCOVERED THE SECRET OF YOUR BELOVED'S CONTROL.
YOU CANNOT HURT ME, ZINN...
YOU GAVE IT TO ME YOURSELF... IN YOUR DREAMS...
...NO... THERE IS NO SUCH THING...
I HAVE YOU TO THANK, DAUGHTER.
IT WASN'T UNTIL THE OLD GOD PASSED TO YOU THAT I WAS ABLE TO FINALLY LEARN THE SECRETS IT HAD LEFT BEHIND IN DREAMS.
ALL THOSE YEARS, IT BLOCKED THEM FROM ME.

OR MAYBE THE OLD GOD WAS BLOCKING THE MEMORIES FROM ITSELF.
SO AFRAID TO REMEMBER YOUR BETRAYALS, YOU SPLIT YOURSELF IN TWO...
...BUT I KNOW WHY YOU KILLED THE SHAMAN-EMPRESS...
...AND I KNOW THE NAME OF THE ONE WHO CONSPIRED WITH YOU...
MARIUM.
OH, NO.
...I DO NOT...I DO NOT KNOW THAT NAME...
COME ON, YOU BASTARD... MOVE...
YOU CANNOT LIE TO YOURSELF FOREVER, ZINN...

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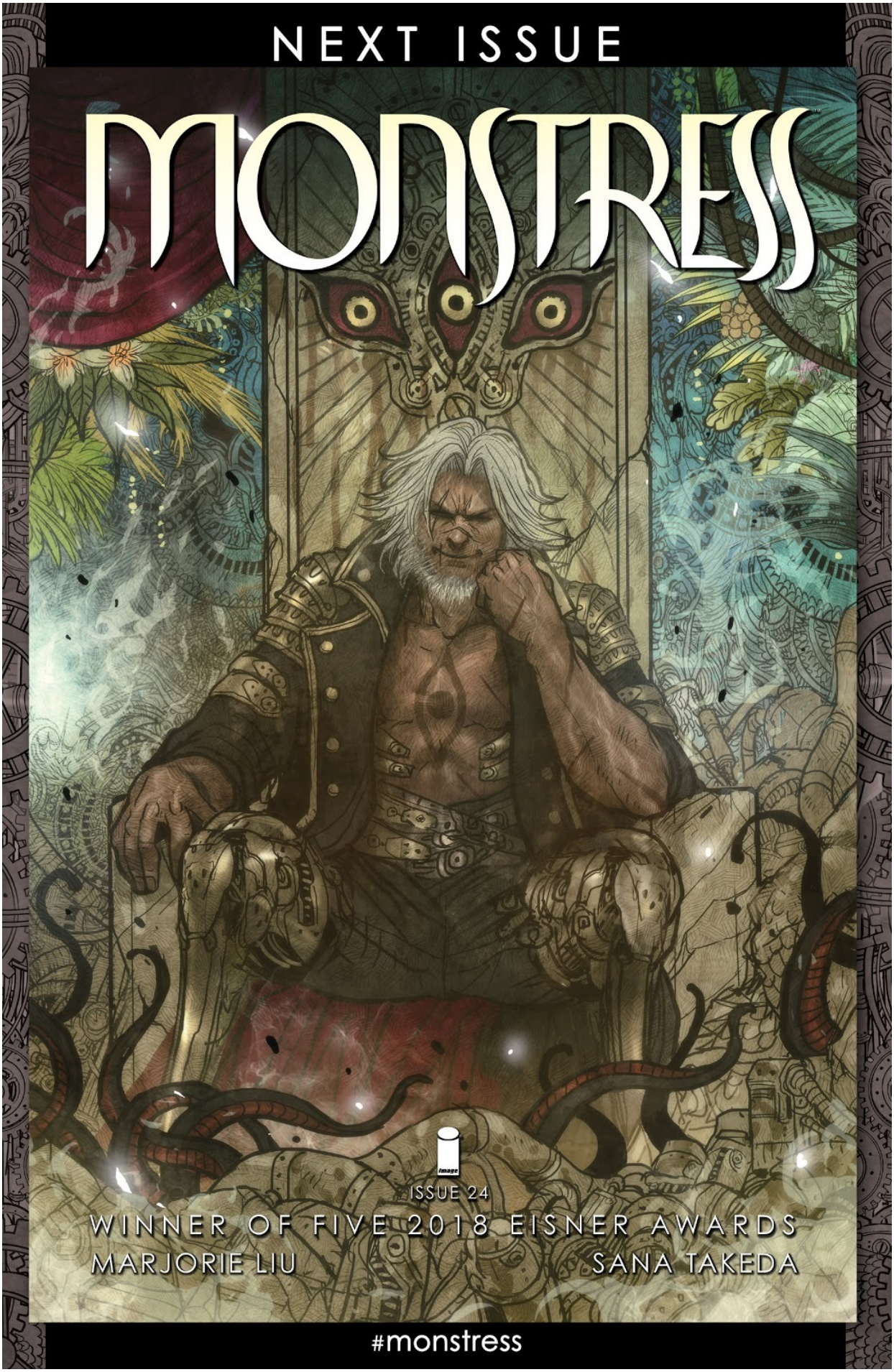
WHAT THE FUCK HAVE YOU DONE?
FINALLY, YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR INHERITANCE.
I AM DELIGHTED.
YOU SHOULD GO BACK TO YOUR ROOM. AFTER YOU'VE RESTED... AND COMPOSED YOURSELF... WE CAN DISCUSS WHAT HAPPENED.
I'M LEAVING. UNLESS YOU'VE CHANGED YOUR MIND, AND I'M ACTUALLY A PRISONER.
NO DAUGHTER OF MINE SHOULD BE POSSESSED. LEAST OF ALL BY ME.
BUT CONSIDER MY OFFER, MAIKA.
I CAN FREE YOU. PERHAPS WHEN WE MEET AGAIN YOU WILL HAVE CHANGED YOUR MIND.
UNTIL THEN...
...MAY YOU EAT WELL.
TO BE CONTINUED...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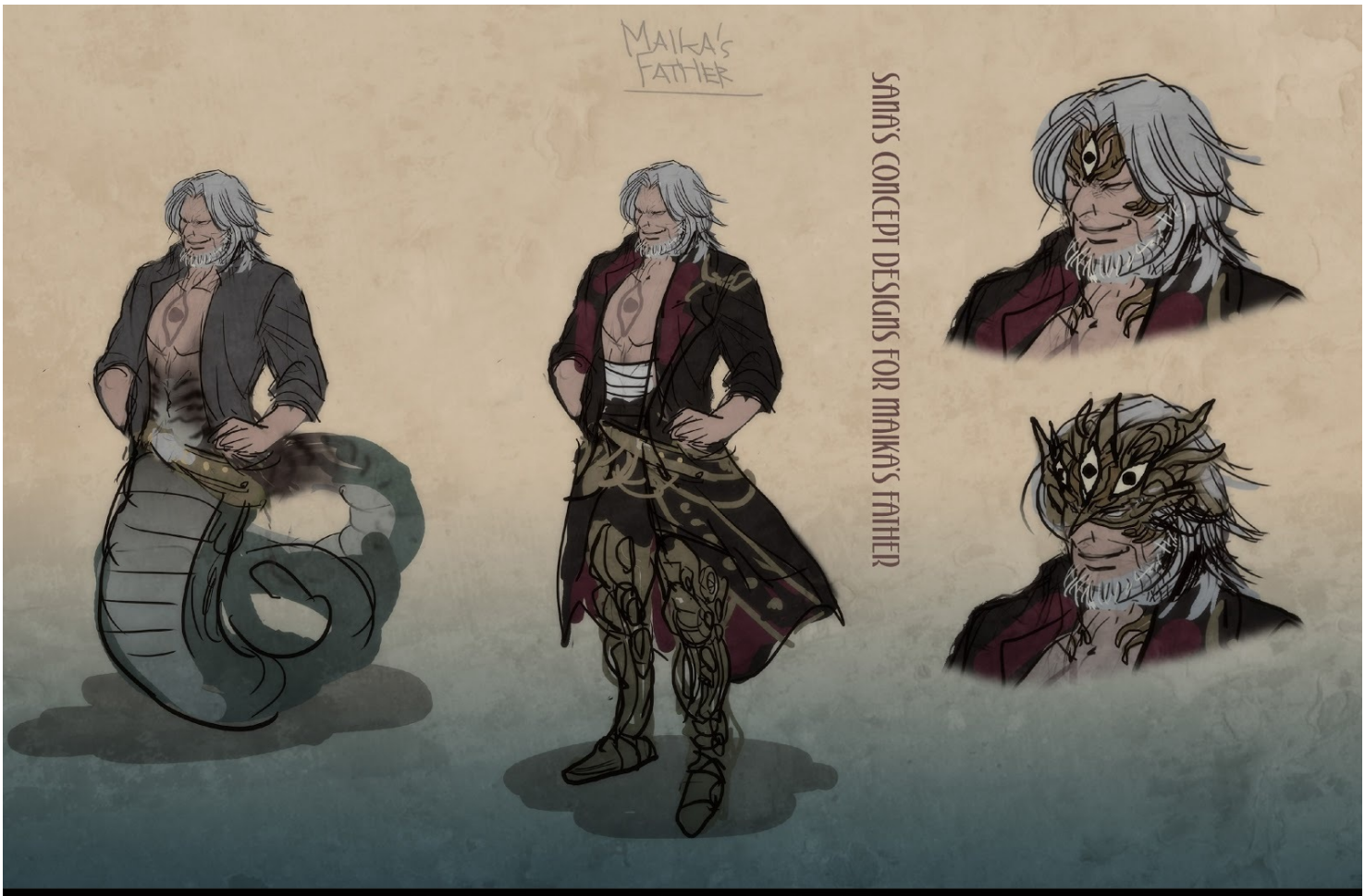

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JULY 2019
COLLECTING VOLUMES 1 - 3!
WINNER Best Writer Eisner Award 2018
WINNER Best Continuing Series Eisner Award 2018
WINNER Best Cover Artist Eisner Award 2018
WINNER Book of the Year Harvey Award 2018
WINNER Best Graphic Story Hugo Award 2018
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2018, Powell's Best Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, and Graphic Novels of the Year
2018, 2016, 2015 Entertainment Weekly's The Best Comic Books of the Year
2018, The Washington Post's 10 Best Graphic Novels of the Year
2018, Barnes & Noble's Best Books of the Year
2018, Thrillist's Best Comics & Graphic Novels of the Year
2018, Newsweek's Best Comic Books of the Year
2018, YALSA's Great Graphic Novels for Teens
"A beautifully told story of magic and fear, inhumanity and exploitation, of what it means to be human and the monsters we all carry inside us. Also, some of the best cats in comics. A delight." —NEIL GAIMAN
"Liu's accomplishment is impressive. She's created characters who feel larger than life, but whose motivations and values are almost always obscure." —NPR
"…as ambitious as George R.R. Martin or J.R.R. Tolkien…" —THE LOS ANGELES REVIEW OF BOOKS
"Filled to the brim with awesome." —KIRKUS REVIEWS
"Intricate and detailed, with a definite manga influence, Takeda's artwork creates a lush and dangerous world for Liu's equally dangerous characters. The work is infused with feminist themes; almost all of the characters are strong—and deadly—women." —SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL
"World-building on a scale rare in mainstream comics." —THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER
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